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Subcommittee Holds Hearing to Appraise the Preventative Measures Taken by Federal Agencies to Protect Federal Workers from the H1N1 Flu

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Thursday, May 14, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia will hold a hearing entitled, “Protecting the Protectors: An Assessment of Front-line Federal Workers in Response to the H1N1 Outbreak .”

The Subcommittee will review the status of agencies’ occupational safety and health protocols that are responsible for protecting federal workers from communicable diseases.

“I am greatly concerned that our front-line federal workers at our borders and points of entry who safeguard the American public are not being allowed to take reasonable and necessary steps to protect their own individual health, as well as the health of their families and the communities where they return at the end of each work day,” said Chairman Stephen F. Lynch. “This doesn’t make sense.”

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued “Interim Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment” (PPE) to its employees on April 30, 2009, which stated that “employees who work closely with (either in contact with or within six feet of) people specifically known or suspected to be infected with the H1N1 virus must wear respiratory protection.”

However, DHS guidance does not appear to adequately address concerns of select federal workers – such as Transportation Security Officers (TSO) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officers. These workers are not being permitted to wear protective masks during their routine inspection duties despite their close interaction with the public.

It is for this reason that the upcoming hearing will examine how skillful key federal agencies have been in addressing the needs of these front-line federal workers.

“Given the years of agency planning, it is troubling to find that guidance for these customs, border patrol and TSA workers is inconsistent and inadequate. These workers who must regularly engage in close contact with the public as part of their normal day-to-day screening duties should be able to wear proper protective masks and gloves without further delay,” said Chairman Lynch. “The federal government can not safely and efficiently conduct any type of enhanced screening operation if it can not ensure its workers that those procedures are safe.”

Witnesses’ testimonies, the Chairman’s opening statement and a 2 p.m. live broadcast of the hearing can be found on the Subcommittee’s website, federalworkforce.oversight.house.gov

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To view a webcast of the hearing, click on the link below:

[Click Here](#)

Documents and Links

- [Chairman Lynch's Statement](#)
- [Statement for the record from Chairman Bennie G. Thompson](#)
- [Testimony of Colleen Kelley](#)
- [Testimony of David Weissman](#)
- [Testimony of Elaine Duke](#)
- [Testimony of Jeffrey Levi](#)
- [Testimony of Nancy Kichak](#)
- [Testimony of T.J. Bonner](#)
- [Testimony of Thomas Galassi](#)
- [Testimony of Thomas O'Brien](#)